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TAGS: [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: SERIAL BLASTS CAUSE SEVERE DAMAGE AND SPARK RIOTS IN ASSAM

#### Summary

¶1. (U) On October 30, a series of bomb blasts took place in different parts of the Northeast Indian state of Assam starting at approximately 11:30 am. The press and CG Kolkata contacts report varying numbers of attacks ranging from 9 to 18. Police confirm at least 50 deaths and the media reports hundreds of casualties. No group has claimed responsibility. Riots have erupted in Assam's capital, with the local population attacking police, ambulances and media personnel. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On October 30, a series of bomb blasts took place in different parts of the Northeast Indian state of Assam starting at approximately 11:30 am. The press and contacts report varying numbers of attacks ranging from 9 to 18. A reliable former police officer told FSN-I that there were 12 explosions. The explosions started in Assam's state capital, Guwahati, where blasts occurred in Ganeshguri, Dispur, Panbazar and Fancy Market areas of the city. The Chief Minister's residence and secretariat is in Ganeshguri. The media reports additional blasts in the towns of Kokrajhar, Barpeta and Bongaigaon located in western Assam north of Guwahati. The attacks targeted mostly busy market places and the seat of government. A police contact told PolFSN that the Assam police have confirmed at least 50 deaths, but the police will not have a complete picture of the attacks until Friday. The media reports hundreds of casualties. Eye witnesses have told CG Kolkata that many of the victims in Guwahati appear to have severe burns.

¶3. (U) The news media and eye witnesses report that people are rioting in Guwahati, attacking police, ambulances and media personnel. A consular warden in Guwahati who witnessed the attacks reports that people were angry because there was little to no response from police or emergency vehicles. He reported that there are large out-of-control fires and that the power in his area had gone out. The phone system is overwhelmed. Police have imposed a curfew in Guwahati and the international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh are reported to be closed.

¶4. (SBU) No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks. Some contacts and media outlets are speculating that the secessionist United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) is responsible, while others are blaming Harkat ul Jehadi Islami (HuJI). Some contacts are speculating that the bomb attacks were in retaliation for attacks by Bodo tribals on Bangladeshi Muslims in early October 2008 in the Udalguri and Darrang districts in western Assam. According to a Delhi based security think tank, 17 people were killed in clashes between armed Bodo tribals and Muslims. Police are reported to have killed an additional 15 people. The same think tank reported that on September 26, Assam security personnel killed seven alleged HuJI militants in Dhubri district in western Assam and recovered arms and RDX from them. State police contacts have repeatedly told CG Kolkata that Islamic extremists are believed to be active in Assam and may have links with ULFA.

Comment

15. (SBU) Violence in Assam is not new, but this is the first time that serial blasts of this scale have occurred in Eastern India. The magnitude and timing of the blasts is unprecedented and not ULFA's typical attack style. Given the recent communal violence, there will likely be a backlash against the Muslim communities in the state. End comment

PAYNE